

H. Res. 54

In the House of Representatives, U.S.,

February 28, 2001.

Whereas February is Black History Month, a month-long celebration for Americans to reflect on both the history and teachings of African Americans whose contributions are still too little known;

Whereas Black History Month was started in 1976 and February was chosen because the birthdays of both Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln fall in that month;

Whereas African Americans were an integral part of settling the West, arriving in covered wagons, establishing self-sufficient settlements, and filling numerous jobs from barber to teacher, doctor to State legislator;

Whereas nearly one-third of the cowboys who helped build the American West were of African American descent;

Whereas one of the best examples of an African American prairie settlement is Dearfield, Colorado, an African American agriculture community;

Whereas Oliver T. Jackson, an African American, inspired by Booker T. Washington's book *Up From Slavery* that urged African Americans to return to the land and earn their own way with their own hands, took these ideas to heart and established Dearfield, Colorado, in 1910;

Whereas Oliver T. Jackson inspired 60 African American settlers to join in his agriculture colony, live off the land, and become self-sufficient;

Whereas within 5 years, Dearfield, Colorado, had 44 wooden cabins, over 600 farm acres, 2 churches, a school, a boarding house, a blacksmith shop, a doctor's office, a cement factory, and a filling station;

Whereas Oliver T. Jackson and those at Dearfield, Colorado, reached their goal of becoming a prosperous, self-sufficient community, with a peak population of 700;

Whereas by the mid-1930's, plagued by drought and the Great Depression, the community dwindled down to 12, including Oliver T. Jackson and his wife; and

Whereas Dearfield, Colorado, was subsequently abandoned and is now in need of restoration in order to help fulfill the goal of Black History Month and educate Americans about the role of African Americans in the settling of the American West: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) encourages all Americans to learn about the history of African Americans whose contributions are still too little known;

(2) recognizes the role that African Americans, like those at Dearfield, Colorado, greatly contributed to settling and shaping the American West; and

(3) supports the restoration of the site at Dearfield, Colorado, in order to educate the American public about

the history and contributions of African Americans to
the West and the United States.

Attest:

Clerk.